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Arson Watch Rewards Presented to Three Who Solved 2004 String of Arson Fires

Rewards were presented to the three people today for helping to solve a string of 2004 arson fires on Cape Cod. John Golembeski, president of the MA Property Insurance Underwriting Association (FAIR Plan) was joined by State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, State Police Major Michael Crisp, Special Agent Jane Hefner, Arson & Explosives Group Supervisor of the Boston Field Division of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as well as members of the Dennis, East Bridgewater, and Mashpee Fire and Police Departments to present the awards in a ceremony at the Dennis Fire headquarters.

John Golembeski said, "The insurance industry has funded the Arson Watch Reward Program since 1982 in Massachusetts. We are pleased to offer some small compensation to citizens who come forward to help investigators solve the crime of arson."

Dana Johnson was rewarded \$4,500 and Bruce Pierce and Mary Bearse were each rewarded \$2,500 for their part in helping officials find the two men that were responsible for setting 13 fires on Cape Cod and one at Johnson's home in East Bridgewater in 2004.

Johnson's home in East Bridgewater was being renovated at the time of the January 23, 2004 fire. Shortly after the fire, Dana Johnson found some of his own missing power tools at a pawnshop in Brockton and immediately notified the East Bridgewater police. The state and local fire investigators had determined the fire was intentionally set and this lead helped them solve the case and to make the connection to the string of robberies and fires on Cape Cod.

Bruce Pierce and Mary Bearse of Dennis called investigators with a description of a white vehicle and a partial registration plate number that they believed might have been associated with the fires on the Cape. This information led investigators to the defendants Jordan McCaroll and Thomas Asteline who later pleaded guilty in federal court on November 10, 2005 to all charges. The two men were sentenced to seven years with three years probation to follow.

Administrative Services • Hazardous Materials Response
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State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Arson is not a victimless crime. The anxiety and fear of possibly being the next victim of an arsonist tears at an entire community." The fires in Eastham, Dennis, Falmouth, Mashpee, Yarmouth, and Wellfleet, were frequently set after the homes, buildings and motor vehicles were broken into. He added, "The citizens and seasonal homeowners of Cape Cod were very anxious during this time not knowing when the next fire would strike."

State Police Major Michael Crisp said, "This case was a fine example of how effectively multiple law enforcement agencies can work together often under intense pressure. The team concept of fire investigation has been used quite effectively in Massachusetts for nearly two decades."

Noting that a large number of these fires occurred in Dennis, fire Chief Mark Dellner said, "I want applaud the seamless cooperation among so many investigative agencies and to particularly thank the public for its help in solving these fires that caused such a deep concern for our citizens."

Among those present at the reward ceremony today in Dennis were State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, State Police Major Michael Crisp, ATF Special Agent Karen Hefner, state police members of the Department of Fire Services' Fire Investigation Unit as well as local fire and police members of the investigation team. The Arson Watch Reward Program offers rewards of up to \$5,000 for information that leads to solving arson cases. The Arson Watch Reward Program is sponsored and administered by the Massachusetts Property Insurance Underwriting Association or the FAIR Plan on behalf of the property and casualty insurance companies in Massachusetts.

1,265 Arsons - 325 Structures, 159 Vehicles, 781 Other Arsons

In 2006, 1,265, or 4%, of the 30,198 fire incidents reported to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System, were considered to be intentionally set, or for the purpose of analysis, arson. The 325 structure arsons, 159 motor vehicle arsons, and 781 outside and other arsons caused four or 9% of the civilian fire deaths, 21 civilian injuries and 27 fire service injuries. The estimated dollar loss from arsons was \$7 million. The average dollar loss per arson fire was \$5,536. Total arson was up 3% from 1,234 in 2005.

Fires McCarroll and Asetline Were Charged With

01/06/2004 640 Nauset Road, Eastham.

Forced entry to an unoccupied seasonal home. Incendiary fire.

1/23/04 617 North Central St, East Bridgewater.

Incendiary fire to home undergoing renovation.

01/28/2004 229 East Falmouth Highway, Falmouth.

Forced entry to an unoccupied office owned and operated by St. Anthony's Church.

Incendiary fire originated in a first floor closet.

11/07/2004 879 Rte 6A, Dennis.

Forced entry to an unoccupied, seasonal dwelling. Incendiary fire originating in the first floor of the structure.

11/09/2004 100 Great Neck Road, Mashpee.

Incendiary fire to the interior of motor vehicle.

11/09/2004 Willow Street, Yarmouth.

Incendiary fire to the interior of an unlocked motor vehicle.

11/09/2004 1098 Rte 6A, Dennis.

Incendiary fires to two motor vehicles, one unlocked, one B&E.

11/09/2004 1129 Rte 6A, Dennis.

Forced entry to a closed law office. Incendiary fire in a first floor office.

11/09/2004 1253 Rte 6A, Dennis.

Forced entry to an unoccupied, seasonal dwelling. Multiple incendiary fires on the first floor of the structure.

11/27/2004 28 Dolphin Way, Dennis.

Forced entry to an unoccupied dwelling. Multiple incendiary fires on the first floor of the structure.

11/28/2004 9 Scarsdale Road, Dennis.

Forced entry to an unoccupied dwelling. Incendiary fire in the basement of the structure.

11/28/2004 4 Brant Road, Dennis.

Forced entry to an unoccupied dwelling. Multiple incendiary fires set in the basement.

11/29/2004 11 Antonelli Circle, Dennis.

Large elderly housing complex, unsecured. Multiple incendiary fires set on the first floor of the structure.

12/15/2004 286 Standish Road, Wellfleet.

Forced entry to a seasonal dwelling, owned by the National Park Service. Multiple incendiary fires within the structure.